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ABSTRACT

A program designed to train learning specialists called consulting teachers who, in turn, train classroom teachers to educate handicapped children in the regular classroom setting is described. Consulting teacher trainees are selected on the basis of teaching experience, leadership capability, academic promise, and commitment to special education. The process specifications of the training program are composed of lectures, on-the-job practica, and apprentice-like advising. Graduate consulting teachers assist and train ssrclassroom teachers to deal with children who are mildly to moderately handicapped. (JD)

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THE CONSULTING TEACHER PROGRAM

TEN YEARS LATER

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

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Special Education Area
College of Education and
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SUMMARY

The University of Vermont Consulting Teacher Program trains learning specialists called consulting teachers who, in turn, train classroom teachers to educate handicapped children in the regular classroom setting. This program is designed to serve 11,000 Vermont children who are mildly to moderately handicapped placed in regular classrooms and home settings. The Program has been in progress since 1968, through the cooperation and collaboration of the University of Vermont, the Vermont State Department of Education, the U.S.O.E. Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, and local Vermont school districts. It is expected that, by 1983, the Program will have trained the 200 learning specialists required for Vermont compliance with PL94-142 and the State Ten Year Plan for Special Education.

Each year, 25 consulting teacher trainees are selected from a pool of over 600 applicants, on the basis of teaching experience, leadership capability, academic promise, and commitment to special education. Each trainee prepares a portfolio of previous and current work experience equivalent to competencies required by the Program. The process specifications of the training program are composed of lectures, on-the-job practica, and apprentice-like advising. Performance of trainees is evaluated via cumulative semester-end evaluations of their portfolio, periodic measures of unit outputs and biweekly measures of task completion. Performance of graduates is evaluated through an annual report of teacher training and child instruction activities submitted

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

In 1968, Lloyd Dunn questioned the justification of special classes for the mildly handicapped. He challenged the 38,839 members of the Council for Exceptional Children to seek more humanitarian and effective alternatives for providing special education. The origin of the Vermont Consulting Teacher Program (McKenzie, Garvin and Cherington, 1968) coincided with Dunn's challenge. Thus, predating both P.L. 94-142, the Education For All Handicapped Children Act (1975) and Vermont's Ten Year Plan for Special Education, voted into law in 1972, the Consulting Teacher Program at the University of Vermont has been advocating for quality education and assisting classroom teachers in implementation of mainstreaming programs in isolated parts of this small, rural, sparsely populated state. In the ten years since its inception in 1968, the Consulting Teacher Program has been providing a graduate program to prepare learning specialists ("consulting teachers") to train and assist classroom teachers in the education of handicapped learners in regular classrooms.

The four basic philosophical assumptions underlying the consulting teacher approach were articulated by Egner and Lates (1975): (a) To evaluate teacher effectiveness, there must be behavioral change of the learner as a function of

the programs the teacher implements; (b) All children can learn, regardless of their handicaps; (c) All teachers can learn, too, and by implication, teachers can learn to effect behavioral change for their learners; (d) The most promising methods that seem to help teachers effectively change the educational and social progress of children are derived from the experimental analysis of behavior.

> The uniqueness of the program remains the collaborative efforts of the University, the State Department of Education, and local educational agencies, coordinating training, placement, and funding of consulting teachers who are ultimately employed by school districts in the state. As Dean Corrigan (1976) reminds us, there is strength in the team relationship of preservice and inservice teachers engaged in the same training program, a relatively new concept of educational personnel training and development.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

Strengths of the program were founded on its cost-effectiveness, through use of presently employed personnel and existing facilities, and its non-categorical base, thus avoiding, for handicapped learners and their families, the discriminatory stigma of labeling and segregation associated with traditional placement of special education students

before the mandatory provisions of P.L. 94-142. While the program focus is its training-based approach, there is the additional spin-off of service to handicapped learners in regular classrooms in the form of accelerated academic performance and the opportunity for social interaction and good role models from non-handicapped peers. With newly acquired teacher skills, there accrues a benefit to all children, including the non-handicapped.

With the training emphasis on applied behavior analysis, there has been a strong built-in evaluation system, substantiating the educational effectiveness of the program. (Hanley, 1978) See Appendix A. Precise records of techniques employed attest to effectiveness of the trainee in accelerating the progress of eligible learners. In addition, the annual data required by the State Department of Education indicates increasing numbers of classroom teachers receiving training and increasing numbers of school districts attempting to secure consulting teacher services.

Training of Consulting Teachers

The training of consulting teachers has undergone extensive evolution since 1968. Initially, a program consisting of two years (plus one summer) trained consulting teachers at the elementary level, but expanded to include

learning specialists in essential early education and secondary settings. Presently, in order to accelerate the training of consulting teachers, the program has shifted to one year plus one summer. Support in school districts with already existing programs enabled us to be assured that consulting teachers trained in one year could provide quality services. Future thrusts and new directions will take shape next year, with the anticipated training of learning specialists in essential/early education, elementary, secondary-vocational, multi-handicapped, and consulting physical therapists.

Historically, recruitment and selection of candidates for the Master of Education program for consulting teachers have been geared to certified, experienced teachers, based on criteria including at least two years of successful classroom teaching, leadership among peers, ability to work well with others, probability of academic success, and desire to help educate Vermont children eligible for special education. As we move toward realizing Vermont's Ten Year Plan for Special Education, the Consulting Teacher Program is now training consulting teachers for employment nationwide.

The initial summer of the program provides introductory coursework in behavior theory and individualizing instruction, including practicum experience with at least one child eligible for special services, in the summer developmental laboratory classroom. During the academic year of training,

students serve in a closely supervised internship in a Vermont school district, consulting with school personnel and parents to develop effective programs for managing and educating a predetermined number of eligible children. In addition, they participate in four seminars a week at the University, broadening their skills and knowledge in the application of individualized instruction, behavior theory, instructional technology, and research applications for classroom use.

Following successful completion of the academic program, and/or alternative demonstrations of the specified competencies, students receive a Master of Education degree, and, based on program approval at the state level, certification as a consulting teacher. Cooperation between the school district which employs a consulting teacher and the State Department of Education is reinforced under state legislation by potential 75% funding of the salary the consulting teacher and consulting teacher aide.

Training of Classroom Teachers

Three levels of training are provided by consulting teachers for classroom teachers learning to apply the data-based individualized model of education to serve handicapped learners in regular classrooms. The special education skills implicit in the model are available through consultation, workshops, and formal coursework for graduate credit.

Training through these ascending levels ranges from consultation, in the form of on-the-job training to provide services for a referred student, through more formal training offered through workshops for certification credit, to the most advanced, university graduate-level coursework, all available on site in the school district. During the 1977-78 academic year, a total of 1159 teachers were involved in the three levels of inservice training, compared to 108 teachers in 1971. This illustrates the growth of the consulting teacher program within Vermont's school districts.

As associate faculty members of the Special Education Area of the College of Education and Social Services at the University, consulting teachers are authorized to offer up to 12 credit hours of graduate level coursework to each teacher within their school districts. The coursework is divided into self-paced instructional units, and emphasizes throughout a clear understanding of the principles of applied behavior analysis and individualizing instruction.

The Consulting Teacher Data-Based Individualized Model of Education

Consulting teachers provide training for classroom teachers based on the data-based individualized model of education for serving eligible children within regular classrooms. Following referral of a child by the classroom teacher for a deficit in language, arithmetic, or social behaviors, and determination of his eligibility for

consulting teacher services, entry level behaviors are measured. These measures represent the behaviors in the child's repertoire in relation to the identified target behaviors, and give the teacher information to determine where the child is in the education process.

After the determination of a child's entry level, the next step is specification of an instructional objective describing where he should be in the learning process. The instructional objective includes a delineation of an observable and measurable behavior, statement of the conditions under which the behavior is to be observed, and a statement of criteria for acceptable performance. (Mager, 1962; Wheeler and Fox, 1972).

Teaching/learning procedures are then developed and implemented to move the child from the entry level performance to the level specified in the instructional objective. In this model, teaching/learning procedures are based on four basic learning principles derived from the experimental analysis of behavior: reinforcement, scheduling of reinforcement, behavioral shaping, and the effects of antecedent stimuli such as technological teaching/learning packages (Monterey, Distar, Sullivan, etc.)

Finally, the last step in the model involves an evaluation of the teaching/learning procedures and the child's progress toward attainment of the specified instructional

objectives. Regular, continuous measures (usually daily) record the child's progress, and are compared to the entry level performance, thus permitting continuous evaluation of the teaching/learning procedures. If the child is shown to be making adequate progress toward instructional objectives, procedures are judged effective. If it is determined that a child is not making adequate progress, the procedures are modified until they are demonstrated effective.

Two of the goals of the data-based individualized model of education are 1) to help the teacher make critical educational decisions based on reliably measured changes in the learner's performance rather than on inferred mental or emotional states, and 2) to involve parents in the development, implementation, and interpretation of their children's educational programs. Over the seven year period, 1971-1978, more than seven thousand Vermont eligible learners have been the beneficiaries of consulting teacher services in regular classrooms. (Hanley, 1978).

Program Goals and Future Directions

Compliance with P.L. 94-142 and the State Ten Year Plan for Special Education requires the training of 200 learning specialists by 1983. With a cumulative total to date of 103 program graduates and anticipated training of an additional 27 students per year, the objective of 200

trained learning specialists by 1983 should easily be achieved.

New thrusts of the Special Education Area will intensify the implementation of mainstreaming efforts of the College of Education and Social Services which the Consulting Teacher Program has promoted and continues to provide. The cross-College core of six credits in special education to be offered to all undergraduate and graduate students, through the Dean's office, will promote awareness of the current mainstreaming legislation and will insure skills in writing individualized education programs ("IEP's") for all future degree recipients in education. The undergraduate Responsive Teacher Program, a preservice program designed to enhance the Consulting Teacher Program, will continue to train regular classroom teachers with special education skills to respond to mainstreaming needs.

Learning specialists will be trained in a range of disciplines to serve the preschool elementary, secondary and multi-handicapped populations. These learning specialists will have dual areas of expertise.

Extention of the Consulting Teacher Program in the current funding proposal to the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped would enhance teacher education at the University of Vermont and in the entire state by the offering of an Inservice Master of Education Degree Program.

This program would make possible field-based inservice training for classroom teachers throughout the state at a distance from the University to complete coursework offered by regular on-campus faculty as well as by consulting teachers who have associate faculty status.

PERSONNEL

In addition to the Area Chairperson and Associate Chairperson, eight faculty members in the Special Education Area are directly involved in the on-campus training for degree candidates enrolled in the Consulting Teacher Program. Certified school district consulting teachers, with associate faculty status, also assist in the training of students, supervising and consulting on practicum activities in the school to which a specific intern is assigned five mornings.

To help advance the interdisciplinary efforts of the College of Education and Social Services, it is planned that faculty members in the Early Childhood and Human Development Program of the School of Home Economics, Vocational Education and Technology Department, (Occupational & Extension Education Program) of the College of Agriculture, Center for Developmental Disabilities, and the Department of Physical Therapy of the Division of Health Sciences will participate in future expansion of the program to train the wider range of learning specialists.

External personnel intimately involved with the Consulting Teacher Program includes: 1) Staff Technical Assistance and Evaluation Consultants of the Division of Special Educational and Pupil Personnel Services, the State Department of Education; 2) school district consulting teachers and aides; 3) school administrators. Usually the superintendent or his designee approves the program proposal which includes needs assessment, eligibility requirements, schools and children to be served, program objectives, and planned activities.

Budget

Categories in the total program budget comprise faculty and staff salaries, stipends and tuition, travel, and supplies. Annual costs for training of consulting teachers have ranged from $60,339.42 in FY 1969 when 12 people were in training to $458,367 in FY 1978 when 54 people were trained. Per student costs have decreased dramatically with increased numbers of students. Average cost per trainee per year has decreased from $15,601.00 in 1975-76 to $8,263.00 in 1977-78. Funding sources have included the University of Vermont General Fund (operating), United States Office of Education, Bureau of Education for the Handicapped and Education Professions Development Act

(student support), the Vermont Department of Education (support of field supervision) and, for the past two years, local education agencies, which provide partial support for within-district service to handicapped learners. Support from the University of Vermont General Fund ("hard" money) has more than doubled since expansion of the University commitment, increasing from 21% in FY 1972 to 44% in FY 1978 of the total program budget.

Contribution to Improvement of Teacher Education

The Consulting Teacher Program has been evolutionary in nature. Originally designed to serve Vermont needs and to forestall possible civil rights actions of handicapped learners and their families, program expansion resulted in its being the precursor to the federal legislation enacted in 1975. Program objectives, in the broadest sense, for this preservice and inservice training model, include transmittal of generalizable awareness skills, knowledge and attitudes about exceptional learners--both handicapped and gifted--to the widest possible variety of constituencies, including parents, teachers, school administrators, and other educational personnel.

Encouraging response to the Consulting Teacher Program has been demonstrated in Vermont by increasing numbers of regular classroom teachers, superintendents, and parents

participating in various facets of the program. Continued state support has similarly been implemented in the tangible form of funding of growing numbers of consulting teachers. Great consistency has been demonstrated by the training provided by the Consulting Teacher Program over the past ten years, in that all program graduates continue to be employed, in an infinite range of special education roles, both in Vermont and elsewhere. Attrition rate has been exemplary. Of the 103 program graduates, 70 are serving as consulting teachers on special education administrators in Vermont districts, eight are doctoral students in creditable national institutions of higher education, and 14 are instate as University of Vermont trainers. The teacher education efforts and advocacy positions have even extended outside the continental limits of the United States, as faculty members have engaged in consulting and sabbatical leave activities in Canada, Costa Rica, Hawaii, Honduras, Israel, and the West Bank.

Evaluation

Analysis of program effectiveness for the Consulting Teacher Program takes several forms. There are three basic evaluation systems which provide 1) ongoing measures of student performance, 2) cumulative measures of student performance, and 3) performance measures of graduates. These are all described in terms of effectiveness through

the training program (Provus, 1971). Other facets of evaluation demonstrate the effectiveness of teacher training efforts through the child change data, requested by the State Department of Education from each school district consulting teacher and collated annually. Another measure attends to the increasing number of classroom teachers involved each year in the three levels of training (Hanley, 1978). Effectiveness of faculty-student interaction is customarily measured in one of two ways: successful completion of the required academic outputs, through ongoing measures of student progress, under the typical program advisement system according to the Discrepancy Evaluation Model, or by documentation of acquisition of competencies, using the portfolio system. Additionally, there is a record of the increased number of trainees completing the Consulting Teacher Program at the University of Vermont and gaining employment in special education.

State certification of consulting teachers is by program graduation, according to the program approval granted to the University of Vermont Consulting Teacher Program, or by competency review by a Board of Consulting Teacher Examiners, originally established under authority of the Teacher and Continuing Education Division of the State Department of Education. This is another indication of state support, attesting to the maintenance of a high quality program.

Others planning a similar program would be well advised to build strong administrative support at the college, state, and local district levels in the early stages of program development. It is critical to lay extensive groundwork for the model and its merits, and to disseminate information to all the constituencies, so they feel informed and involved in the process. Even before the decision is made to begin implementation, it is important to gain the confidence and support of the school principal, who can help build incentives for participating teachers.

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APPENDIX A

SCHOOL YEAR	NUMBER OF CONSULTEES	NUMBER OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS	NUMBER OF COURSE ENROLLEES	NUMBER OF TEACHERS IN TRAINING PROGRAMS
1971-1972	71	27	26	108
1972-1973	139	44	54	187
1973-1974	299	124	150	428
1974-1975	381	203	277	610
1975-1976	519	165	342	724
1976-1977	594	163	358	768
1977-1978	841	148	586	1159

Table 14. Number of classroom teachers involved in in-service training programs with consulting teachers.

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